



Housing and Environment News

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

U.S Department of Agriculture

**Newsletter
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USDA/CSREES News



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● **Farm Bill**

The Farm Bill passed this Spring includes changes for CSREES, including a name change to the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), to be established by October 1, 2009. Current CSREES authorities will be incorporated into NIFA. The head will be appointed to a 6-year term by the President and will report directly to the Secretary of Agriculture or designee.

Housing News

● **Foreclosure Help**

While Congress debates the nation's growing mortgage crisis, state and local governments are enacting their own programs.

Fairfax County, VA approved a program to buy foreclosed properties for middle-income families to expand the county's stock of affordable housing for first-time buyers, especially teachers, police officers, and firefighters who otherwise couldn't afford to live in the county where they work.

Maryland passed one of the nation's most comprehensive packages designed to help ease the problem. Maryland's package contains new laws that increase penalties for mortgage fraud, and gives homeowners more time to catch up on their bills before losing their homes to foreclosure.

Other communities address the crisis primarily through counseling and financial help, such as utility payment assistance.

Housing News (cont.)

• Energy STAR Qualified Homes: Affordable Housing

Lower-income families typically spend more of their household income on utilities than higher-income families. ENERGY STAR helps to increase access to energy efficiency for lower-income families by working with affordable housing stakeholders (such as housing finance agencies, public housing authorities, developers, and building owners) to help them incorporate energy efficiency measures into new and existing affordable housing. For information, visit the ENERGY STAR [Affordable Housing](#) Web page.

Tools to help homeowners improve their home's energy efficiency include:

- [ENERGY STAR Home Advisor](#) - provides recommended home improvement projects
- [ENERGY STAR Home Energy Yardstick](#) - uses utility bill data to compare your home to others.

How You Can Help

- Hand out [fact sheets](#) and order free [brochures](#) about the energy-efficient features of an ENERGY STAR-qualified home and the benefits to homeowners.
- Encourage affordable housing developers and others to participate in ENERGY STAR.
- Become a certified home energy rater, especially if you are located in a rural area, so you can help homeowners verify their homes are energy efficient.
- Highlight local ENERGY STAR partners' efforts in your community outreach. Locate [local partners](#) in your area.
- Participate in ongoing [national consumer awareness campaigns](#).

For questions on ENERGY STAR affordable housing, contact [Brian Ng](#).

Submitted by Amber Wysocki, ICF International

10 Top Technologies for Homes

- Mold-resistant gypsum
- Solar water heating
- Recycled concrete substitutes and aggregates
- Combined heat and power
- Horizontal axis washer/dryer
- Hydrophilic, impact-resistant windows
- Super-sized (vertical) insulated concrete forms
- Induction cooktops
- GPS for land development
- Permeable pavers and pavement

Source:

PATH's [list of technologies](#) with the most promise makes homes more durable, stronger, and resource efficient.



Program Updates

Home Energy Network COP

In a recent survey of Cooperative Extension Directors (N=62) to identify priorities, 89 percent listed creating pathways to energy independence as the highest priority.

The North Central Extension Housing Specialists, meeting last month in St. Paul, MN, decided to form a Home Energy Network eXtension community of practice (COP). A first step is to compile a nationwide list of people who would be interested in being part of the COP. At this point, the North Central States are part of the group and we have also heard from Florida, Montana, NASULGC, the Home Builders Association, and EPA's Energy Star program.

Home Energy Network CoP - cont

If you are interested in being part of the Home Energy Network COP, please send your name to [me](#), [Shirley Niemeyer](#), or [Mike Goldschmidt](#). We plan to develop an action plan, including a logic model and a Web site of home energy information once we have a listserve established.

EDEN - National Preparedness Month

September is National Preparedness Month and the Cooperative Extension Service, through EDEN, is a partner in this fifth annual campaign. This year's national campaign, which is led by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, will focus on four specific areas of awareness:

- Get a Kit
- Make a Plan
- Be Informed
- Get Involved

EDEN's role is to connect state and local extension offices with expert materials in disaster mitigation, prevention, preparedness, recovery, and response. Our intent is to provide key resources that will allow your state to share information both efficiently and effectively.

NPM materials are available on the [EDEN National Preparedness Month Web page](#).

Resources

Talking About Disasters Guide



The [Talking About Disasters Guide for Standard Messages](#) is available in a newly organized format for professionals to deliver consistent preparedness messaging to the public. This guide is maintained by the Coalition of Organizations for Disaster Education (CODE), which includes USDA, and works by professional consensus of the participants.

FLASH

FLASH, the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes, is a source of fast and easy access to information to strengthen your home against such disasters as floods, windstorms, and more. Their toolbox includes printed resources, such as Blueprint for Safety News, on their [Web site](#). Contact FLASH toll free at (877) 221-SAFE or by [e-mail](#).

Opportunity

Consumer Information Catalog

The Federal Citizen Information Center wants to develop relationships with new partners, whether government agencies or from the private sector, that have a housing message to share with consumers. If your organization has created a publication or is interested in creating one that will educate consumers, we welcome the opportunity to help you. We are planning our next edition of the Consumer Information Catalog. Contact [Marietta Jelks](#) at (202) 501-0984

People in the News

Mary Yearns

Mary Yearns, professor and extension housing specialist at Iowa State University (ISU), received the Sid Spector Memorial Award in March at the National Council on aging meeting in Washington, DC, from the National Institute of Senior Housing in honor and appreciation for exemplary and long-standing service to the senior housing field. Her 35-year career at ISU has focused on the housing needs of an aging population and persons with disabilities. She has been a pioneer in developing interactive exhibits to demonstrate the benefits of universal design and home accessibility. She also developed a variety of educational materials to support these efforts, which can be downloaded from her [Universal Design and Home Accessibility](#) Web site.

Michael Dietz

Dr. [Michael Dietz](#) has joined the faculty of Utah State University (he has Leona Hawks' former position) as an extension specialist in Environment and Society with an interest in sustainable housing. He is in National Resources and can be reached at (435) 797-3313.

It's good to see positions being filled; Virginia State University is advertising their housing specialist position (John Kirby retired) and Oklahoma State plans to advertize their position shortly.

I hope you have a wonderful summer, including some time for R and R.

See you in the Fall at the Healthy Housing Conference in Baltimore (September 15-17), the Housing Education and Research Association meeting in Indianapolis (October 7-10), the Association of Home Equipment Educators Meeting in Knoxville (October 22-24) or the EDEN meeting in Vermont (November 4-7).

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To learn about CSREES, visit
www.csrees.usda.gov



The mission of CSREES is to advance knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well being, and communities. The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Joseph Laquatra

Joseph Laquatra, the Hazel E. Reed Human Ecology Extension Chair in Family Policy in the College of Human Ecology at Cornell, has been appointed to the state's first task force on toxic mold. The Toxic Mold Task Force, a 14-member panel of experts, will investigate health issues associated with toxic mold. The group will review scientific research on toxic mold and the illnesses it causes. Legislators urged the panel be formed after hearing complaints of debilitating exposure to potentially lethal indoor air and concluding toxic mold is an under-recognized health problem.

